

Message Text

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ACTION OPIC-06

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FM AMCONSUL BELIZE

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6493

UNCLAS BELIZE 648

FOR OPIC

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: EFIN BH

SUBJECT: DEEPWATER PORTS IN BELIZE

REF: STATE 161239

1. CONSTRUCTION OF GOB'S NEW DEEPWATER PORT AT BELIZE CITY APPEARS ON SCHEDULE AND SHOULD BE COMPLETED IN JULY 1979. MEISENER MARINE CONSTRUCTION, INC., ST. PETERSBURG, FLORIDA, IS CONTRACTOR FOR 2,500 FOOT PIER AND PIERHEAD WHARF AREA. SPOKESMAN FOR FIRM TOLD CONOFF THAT PIER CONSTRUCTION IS ACTUALLY AHEAD OF SCHEDULE, BUT THAT MEISENER OFFICIALLY PROJECTS JULY 1979 AS COMPLETION DATE. ONLY PROBLEM ENCOUNTERED TO DATE IS HARDER THAN ANTICIPATED SUB-SURFACE STRATA WHICH HAVE FORCED MEISENER TO DRILL IN ORDER SINK PILES. HOWEVER, THIS HAS NOT INTERFERED WITH CONSTRUCTION SCHEDULE AND FIRM ANTICIPATES NO SERIOUS DELAYS, BARRING MAJOR BREAKDOWN OF EQUIPMENT.

2. ROBERT MAHLER, CONSULTING ENGINEER TO GOB, CONCURS IN MEISENER ESTIMATE AND JUDGES THAT CONSTRUCTION OF ONSHORE FACILITIES WILL KEEP PACE WITH PIER CONSTRUCTION. HE BELIEVES PORT WILL BE IN FULL OPERATION BY SEPTEMBER 1979. :9,54-:5 59 43:)-8. 4 1/2 ACRES OF MANGROVE SWAMP FOR SHORE FACILITIES WILL BE SIGNED WITH JAMAICAN FIRM WEEK OF UNCLASSIFIED

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JULY 3. TENDERS ARE OUT FOR 20,000 SQUARE FOOT TRANSIT SHED, AND GOB HOPES CONTRACT WILL BE SIGNED SHORTLY AND WORK BEGUN WITHIN THREE MONTHS. CONTRACTS FOR 7,500 SQUARE FOOT OFFICE BLOCK AND OTHER ANCILLARY SHORE FACILITIES WILL LIKELY GO TO LOCAL FIRMS (OR FIRMS) CAPABLE OF COMPLETING CONSTRUCTION WITHIN SCHEDULE FOR OVERALL PROJECT.

3. BEST ESTIMATES INDICATE PORT WILL BE ABLE TO ACCOMMODATE MAXIMUM OF TWO VESSELS OF 300 FEET OR LESS AT ANY ONE TIME. 0834#3-\$ 28)) #-;3 49))-ON/ROLL-OFF CAPABILITY AND 17 1/2 FEET OF WATER ALONGSIDE. NO ONE HERE BELIEVES IT POSSIBLE TO GIVE TONNAGE ESTIMATES UNTIL LORT IS ACTUALLY IN OPERATION.

4. PROJECT TO CONSTRUCT DEEPWATER BERTH AT COMMERCE BIGHT JUST SOUTH OF DANGRIGA (STANN CREEK TOWN) REMAINS ON DRAWING BOARD. ALTHOUGH PRE-QUALIFICATION OF POTENTIAL CONTRACTORS BEGAN IN OCROBER 1976 AND BIDS TENDERED, NO CONTRACT AS YET SIGNED. GOB APPARENTLY BELIEVES CONTRACT WILL EVENTUALLY GO MEISENER (SINCE HEAVY EQUIPMENT ALREADY IN BELIZE) AND HOPES WORK CAN BEGIN ONCE PILINGS COMPLETED ON BELIZE CITY PORT. WE ANTICIPATE THAT THIS PROJECT, IF AND WHEN IT GETS UNDER WAY (THERE MAY BE FINANCIAL PROBLEMS), CANNOT BE COMPLETED BEFORE MID-1980. COPY OF PRE-QUALIFICATION NOTICE, WHICH GIVES SPECIFICATIONS OF CONSTRUCTION GOB DESIRES, WILL BE POUCHED TO OPIC WEEK OF JULY 3.

5. PRIVATE PORT PROJECT BEING DEVELOPED FOUR MILES WEST OF BELIZE CITY BY U.S. CITIZEN IS NOW OPEN FOR BARGE OPERATIONS AND COULD HANDLE 2,500 - 2,600 TON SHALLOW DRAFT VESSELS. DEVELOPER STATES THERE IS POSSIBILITY HE WILL EXPAND WHARF FACILITY AND DREDGE TO DEPTH OF 18 FEET, BUT THIS DEPENDS ON POTENTIAL REVENUES WHICH AT PRESENT ARE TOO NEBULOUS TO JUSTIFY INVESTMENT. CURRENT NEGOTIATIONS WITH BELIZE SUGAR INDUSTRIES, UNCLASSIFIED

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8* 7::3 *7), COULD RESULT IN RAPID EXPANSION TO ACCOMMODATE COUNTRY'S SUGAR EXPORTS. HOWEVER, WE UNDERSTAND THERE ARE PROBLEMS WITH FINANCING AND ON BALANCE WE TEND TO DOUBT THIS VENTURE WILL RESULT IN TRUE DEEP WATER PORT WITHIN NEXT COUPLE OF YEARS. LONGER TERM POSSIBILITY OF HANDLING BELIZEAN GRAIN EXPORTS ALSO EXISTS SINCE NO GOB PORT FACILITY WILL HAVE SUFFICIENT SPACE FOR DOCKSIDE STORAGE AND LOADING MACHINERY.

6. CONGEN WILL INFORM OPIC OF ANY CHANGES, DELAYS, OR OTHER SIGNIFICANT DEVELOPMENTS.
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